

A  
DISSWASIVE  
FROM  
GAMING.

*By a Minister of the Church of*  
ENGLAND.



L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by *Joseph Down-*  
*ing,* in *Bartholomew-Close,* near  
*West-Smithfield,* 1726.



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GAME signifies a merry Play or *Diversion*. The Word probably comes from the Greek Word *Γάμος*, which, in Strictness, signifies a *Nuptial Entertainment*; but may in a larger Acceptation, denote any set way of *Merriment* and *Past-time*. Now some sort of *Diversion* and *Relaxation* of the Mind seems absolutely necessary for us in our present State of *Frailty*. We are not of the Nature of *Angels*, who are above these corporeal *Entertainments*; and it should be our Care, that we be not as the brute *Beast* brought under the Power and Sway of them.

It is most certain, That no Person, in this short Space of this probational Life, can have much Time to spare for *Diversion*; considering that he has the great Concern of eternal Li-

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to secure, and that this cannot be done but by the Conquest of many sensual *Appetites*, many worldly *Vanities*, and many infernal *Enemies*. And when such a Person finds it necessary to divert himself, he ought above all things, to look well that no Snares of the *Enemy* lie hid under the Diversion that he allows himself: because at this time, his Mind will be less ready to withstand the Attack of an *Enemy*, being, as it were, in the Condition of a *Soldier*, that has laid by his Armour for a while, the more freely to recreate and disport himself.

This being then the true *Reason* and *End* of Game and Diversion, we are hence instructed in two Points concerning it. *First*, That if there be any thing call'd *Game*, which is neither a Recreation to our *Body*, nor *Mind*, it is an unlawful thing, and must be shunned by all wise and sober Persons as a Canker and Consumer of Time, which is the most valuable of all *Earthly Things*. And *Secondly*, That all such Sports and Games as are manifest Temptations to Sin, and do many times expose Men to Ruine, are to be renounced with Disdain, in *Christian Prudence*, and in point of *Conscience*: It being a manifest Christian Duty to shun all foreseen *Temptations* and *Occasions* of Sin, where no Necessity constrains us to it, and where the Good proposed by it cannot in any Measure counterpoise the *Evil* which is to be feared.

We will only at present consider the Games of *Carding* and *Dicing*, (since other Games will be included hereby so far as the parity of Reason affects them) and inquire, *Whether a prudent*

*dent and sincere Christian may warrantably allow himself in the Use of those Games, without a Diminution to that Character?*

Now here, in our first Thoughts of the Matter, we may be assured that some Exercises of these Games are unquestionably Evil, tho' we should suppose the Games themselves to be indifferent and innocent. As if any one plays *unseasonably*, or on the Lord's-Day, or on Days of publick Humiliation, or in the proper Seasons of Prayer, or even so as to prejudice our necessary worldly Business; or if any one plays at these Games merely to get another's Money; or if he plays till he *wrangles* and *affronts* his Company; or if he plays too long, so that he exceeds the *Reason* and *Intention* of Diversion. These things are manifestly Evil: and whosoever takes not due Care to secure himself against this *fourfold Snare*, we may, without scruple, term his Habit of *Gaming* a base and pernicious Vice. For 'tis, in Truth, the Mother of many Vices; as of *Idleness*, *Vanity*, and *Levity* of Spirit; yea, it nurses at the same time the two opposite Vices of *Covetousness* and *Profuseness*.

And here, in truth, it is even amazing to consider, in what different and almost contradictory Circumstances we shall behold the eager *Gamester*: For he is at the same time both *busy* and *idle*, in *Toil*, and yet in *Play*; *diverted*, and yet *tormented*; and perhaps also *cheating*, and *cheated*. He is in the same Hour both surfeited with *Affluence*, and pinched with *Penury*. And he is all the while excruciated betwixt Hope and Fear, which is a mere *Rack* to the Mind, instead of a *Diversion*.

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I have a few things therefore to offer to considerate Minds with reference to this Matter, and I pray God assist every one that peruses this Paper with his Grace, that he may apply it to his Benefit in both Worlds; for, I suppose, none are ignorant, that many Persons have, by the extreme Vanity of *ungoverned Gaming*, both ruined their *Estates* in this World, and their *Souls* in the other. Be it therefore duly considered that,

I. The Games of *Cards* and *Dice*, will be very likely to devour *much Time* wherever they are allowed: which is a very important Consideration. For nothing can be to our Advantage or Comfort, that vainly consumes many of those precious Moments, which serve to all our Purposes under the Sun. For when Time fails, nothing can be done.

I would therefore ask such as at any time are about to set themselves to *Gaming*, what Time they propose to spend in it? And to this some will answer, perhaps, that they design to pass away an *Hour* or two; And others, that they intend to spend a *Winter-Evening* at it. But here, alas! very few are true to their Time assigned. For even they who spend the longest Evening in *Gaming*, do too often entrench upon the next Morning too. But if we suppose them to be punctual to their least allotment of time, and they that do break off, when they have plaid an *Hour* or two; the reckoning will swell high in time. For if an *Hour* or two be given up to *Gaming* this Day, and as much to *Morrow*, or on many other Days; alas! How great a Share of the active part of

our poor *Threescore Years and Ten* will be spent, yea, squander'd away, in *idle Play*, and in impertinent *Amusements*, or perhaps in Quarrels and random Discourse, in covering and striving for that which is another's, and in many other Offences against God.

O *Christians!* How do you think to pass such Reckonings as these with the *Great and Holy God* at last? Can you think that he will allow such Accounts of your *Stewardship*? Do you not consider, That one *single Minute* of that Time, which you now so prodigally wast, cannot be purchased with the whole World, were you Master of it, when you come to your last important *Moment*! Will you not then cry out with that serious *Young Prince* of ours in the last Age, *Oh that I had now the Hours that I have spent at Tennis!* A Play, for which more may be said, as being a *wholesome bodily Exercise*, than for the sedentary and insignificant Games of *Carding* and *Dicing*. And this leads us to a *Second Consideration*.

II. These Games administer no considerable Exercise to the Body, and they do exceedingly amuze and entangle the Mind; so that they are falsely called by the Name of Diversions. We are told in History, that they were invented at the Siege of some Cities in *Asia*, as a Contrivance to deceive the Hunger of the Besieged in those times, when Towns were rather won by Starving their Garrisons by a long Blockade, than by the speedier modern way of grinding them to Powder by the Means of heavy Mortars and Artillery. Which shews the Power, of these Games upon the Minds of Men,

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in that they were able to divert the *sharpest* and most *impatient* of all humane Apperites, those of *Hunger* and *Thirst*. Surely such a *Captivating Diversion* must needs be unsafe and unadvisable to *Christians*; whose Minds ought always to be girt, and in a fit Posture to do Service to their *Master*, and to oppose the Onsets and Attacks of spiritual Enemies, who are never far from us, but do usually invest us with formidable *Legions*.

III. There is usually some apparent ill Consequence of Gaming, before such as set to it give it over. It too often sacrifices good Company, good Humour, and a good Conscience together: Some Broil or other usually arises, or some indecent Levity and Jesting, or some Excess in point of Time, or otherwise; which will make a serious Mind wish, that it had not been admitted.

IV. We find nothing like these Vanities in the Lives of the Holy *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, nor in the Life of our perfect Pattern, the Lord *Jesus Christ*, whose *Sheep* bear his Voice, and follow his Steps; and therefore we find no such trifling way of mis-spending time allowed by the *Holy Apostles* and the *Primitive Christians*: But, on the contrary, these Things, or the like to them, have been condemned by *Learned* and *Pious Men* of all Ages. Our Church forbids her Ministers to *play at Cards, Dice, or Tables, or any other unlawful Game, by Day or by Night, upon Pain of Ecclesiastical Censure*. Can. xxv. And this is required of Ministers, that they may be *Examples of Holy Life to their People*; as it follows in the *Canon*: which shews that

that it is also there intended, that every Person whoſoever ſhould be diſſwaded from ſuch *Unchriſtian Practices*. For they are condemned alſo by the *Laws of our Land*, as unſufferable; and all ſuch *Publick Houſes* as allow them are required to be ſuppreſt, as *Nuſances* in the *Community*; and their *Licenſes* are by any ſuch *Fact* abſolutely made void. (2, 3. *Phil. & M.*)

V. The very Name of *Paſtime* is an abſurd and hateful Notion: as if we needed any *Artifice* to haſten the Flight of our ſpeedy and irretrievable Moments: which paſs away of themſelves ſwifter than our very Thoughts, and will ſoon caſt us into the *Blifs* or *Torment* of an unchangeable Eternity.

Merhinks theſe Conſiderations ſhould pall any thoughts of *Gaming* in all that would act with *Advice* in the Conduct of their Lives. And as for ſuch as act otherwiſe, they fall under a deplorable *Character*, and all Advice and Counſel to them will be utterly loſt. For inſtead of attending to the *Reason* of theſe things, they will be apt to cry out, tho' indeed moſt abſurdly, and ſay, what an intolerable *Preciſeneſs* is this? What, not ſo much as encourage us to a Game at *Chriſtmas*? That *Festival* will not look like it ſelf without it.

But I pray you, *Sirs*, what is there in the *Birth of Chriſt* that ſo well ſuits with this extreme Vanity, as you pretend? Did not our *Bleſſed Saviour* come into the World to deſtroy the *Works of the Devil*; to free us from the *Folly* and *Pollution* of our carnal Minds and Hearts; and to make us *Enemies* to the *Pomps and Vanities of this wicked World*? CHRISTIAN  
GAMING



GAMING is the most absurd thing you can mention. Whatsoever is *Christian*, is *Christ-like*, and savours of his *Spirit* : But who does affirm this of *Gaming* ?

And truly *Christians* need it not for a *Diverſion* : We have more noble *Entertainments* offered us always, particularly at the Festival of our *Blessed Saviour's Nativity* before mentioned. With what divine *Elevation of Soul* may we then, or at any time, contemplate or discourse of the marvellous *Compassion, Condescension, and Love* of God, who was manifest in the *Flesh* ! And what infinite *Advantages* are hereby opened to Mankind : since by this the *Malice* of the Devil against Men is effectually countermined, and they are now made capable of being translated from the *Power of Darkneſs to the Kingdom of God's dear Son* : yea, the *Sons of Men* may now become the adopted *Children of God*, and attain a *Meetneſs* for, and a *Title* to, his Everlasting Kingdom. Who can but praise the infinitely *Wise, Holy, and Merciful God*, who hath by this astonishing *Expedient* brought in even his *Righteousneſs* to act in the pardon of a penitent *Sinner* believing in *JESUS* : So that he can now be absolutely *Just, and yet a Justifier of them that believe*. The thankful Remembrance of these things will be Matter of a *Noble*, yea, of a *Heavenly Joy* : For we may be sure, the *Holy Angels* will join with us while we sing *Glory to God in the highest, on Earth Peace, good Will towards Men*.

We see then, a *Christian* needs not go a begging for *Pleasure* at the Devil's Doors. He has a more delicious *Feast* of his own upon the *Hidden*

*Hidden Manna*: even in that *Peace of God* which passeth all *Understanding*; and in that *Joy of the Holy Ghost* which raises a *Foy unspeakable and full of Glory*. And these *Divine Suavities* are almost as much better than the *Envy, Malice, and Passion*, which the Devil many times blows up in *Gamesters*, as *Heaven* is than *Hell*. For as the *Holy Spirit* is the Author of the *Divine Peace and Joy of holy Souls*, so we may well suspect, both from the extravagant *Passions* and fierce *Emotions* of *Gamesters* in the Heat of their Play, and from their Want of Power to give it over, that they are very much actuated by *Evil Spirits*, who will, without doubt, be very forward to assist the Students in their *Books*, and the Lovers of their *Devices*.

O! what have they to answer for before the *Great and Holy God*; who make a Trade of cheating and impoverishing of Men by the pernicious Artifices of *Gaming*; who at once pretend to *entertain*, and design to *destroy* their Brethren; like *Joab* to *Amasa*, with one Hand they embrace, and with the other they stab.

How many Young Heirs have fall'n a Prey to this rooking Generation of Men? How many Apprentices have ruined themselves, and robbed their Masters, to feed those cruel and insatiable Horse-Leeches? Enough to make every discreet Young Man resolve, even in common Prudence, never to expose one Penny to such Merciless Thieves and Robbers: nor ever to expend the comfortable Patrimony of their Fathers in a foolish way of Prodigality, which beggars a Man without the least Gratification of any reasonable Appetite.

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And as for such as make Account of getting their Livelihood by *Gaming*, as by a more *easy*, and, as they call it, a more *gentile* way, than by an *honest Trade*; they are usually deceived and ruined by this their idle Project. For they are hereby brought to an idle and luxurious way of Life; and have no honest way to support these great Expences, and the Losses which often befall them in their *Play*. They are too *lazy* to *Work*, and too *proud* to *Beg*; and there seems but one way left that can speedily supply their Wants, which is that of Robbery; and this seldom fails to bring them to the *Gallows*. Or if we view their Case on the fairest side, and suppose, that among the *Thousands* that are begger'd by *Gaming*, there may be one Instance produced of an Estate gotten by it; yet this volatile sort of Gain will soon appear to be an *unblest Portion*, and is seldom transmitted to the *third Generation*.

And yet notwithstanding all the *Sin* and *Misery* that has been brought upon Men by these means, some People may perhaps reply, That they cannot be so disobliging to the *Company*, as to stand out, when desired by others to play with them; because 'twould look like a condemning them of Sin or Folly. But on such an Occasion, any one may without the least Breach of Manners reply, That tho' we do not any ways censure those prudent Persons who are perswaded of the Lawfulness of these *Games*, and can secure themselves against the *Inconveniencies* that attend them: yet if we think them unlawful or inexpedient, they will be so to us, whatever they be in themselves; yea, if we

we are in doubt about them. And it would be but ill Manners in any one to press another to a thing, for which he has made so *solid and discreet an Apology*.

In truth, our Condition on Earth is so frail polluted, and exposed to the Wrath of God and we have before us such awful Indications of it, that a *serious*, yea, a *sorrowful Spirit*, does much more become us, and must needs be more safe and expedient for us, than *Sport and Pastime*.

Upon the whole. *Thole Wise and Good People*, who are not drawn to their Diversions by any misbecoming *Motives*, and can discreetly *time* the Season and Measure of them; who have a sure Guard against the *Temptations and Inconveniencies* which usually attend them; and do not find themselves *unfit* for better things when they have been at them. These *Persons* will deserve to stand the fairest for a Licence to *Game*, but will be the last perhaps that will allow themselves in it.

## F I N I S.

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